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## DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

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### THE USE OF TOBACCO AS A CAUSE OF FAILURES AND WITHDRAWALS IN ONE HIGH SCHOOL

In the school of which the writer has supervision it has been noticed that the odor of tobacco often accompanies low marks; and furthermore, that the boys who come from other high schools, smelling of tobacco, usually fail to bring credit for all the studies taken in those schools. It was suspected, also, that student mortality might be greatest among those addicted to the tobacco habit.

To get at the facts in the matter I had one of the students make an investigation. The task was given him as a piece of original research in the class in economics, the subject assigned being "The Effect of Smoking on Student Efficiency." This young man was chosen with some care. He is a Senior, capable, trustworthy, and an earnest worker. He does not use tobacco himself; yet he enjoys the confidence of all the boys who smoke. He is the best all-round athlete in the school, captain of the track team, quarterback on the eleven, and member of the glee club. He disarms envy, however, by working to earn money and support himself in part while attending school.

The young investigator had the privilege of moving about during study periods, sitting and talking with the other boys as he saw fit. The school records of marks and attendance were open to him; and while he did not disclose to me the names of any smokers, he had access to me constantly for advice in the work. In each case he assured the boy investigated that the information he secured was for statistical purposes only, and that he would in no case disclose the names of smokers. The smokers had confidence in these assurances. They freely told him the facts about their use of tobacco, and in some cases became much interested in the problem he was investigating. But he took pains in all cases to check up the statements of a boy by the statements of that boy's friends, so that he might know that the information he received was *bona fide*.

Sixty-two boys were investigated in the first-year class and ninety-four in the second, third, and fourth. These comprised very nearly all the boys now in school. In addition he secured reliable information regarding forty-five of the sixty-two boys who have left school in the past three years without completing their course, and all the graduates of these years. The results of the investigation are particularly interesting. Of the graduates not one was found to have been an habitual smoker while in school. Of the forty-five quitters who were investigated all were habitual smokers and none were in good standing in their classes at the time they left school. The average grade of these in all studies was 69 per cent, six points below the passing mark.

Of the ninety-four upper-class boys, thirty-eight were found to be habitual smokers; thirty-six never had smoked; and twenty had formerly smoked more or less, but had abandoned the habit. Their grades are as follows:

Non-smokers.....	83 per cent
Habitual smokers.....	76 per cent
Reformed smokers.....	79 per cent

The marks are in each case an average of all the marks received by that group of students while in the high school.

Of the sixty-two first-year students, seventeen were found to be habitual smokers, forty-one never smoked, and four had given up the practice. Their grades when averaged were as follows:

Non-smokers .....	84 per cent
Habitual smokers.....	76 per cent
Reformed smokers.....	82½ per cent

In the case of those students who had recently learned to smoke it was found that the time of acquiring the habit was registered by a slump in their marks. Their general average before they took to tobacco had been 85 per cent; while afterward it fell to 78 per cent. The average number of smokes a day indulged in by the smokers as a whole is six. One young man of twenty confessed to having smoked as many as fifty cigarettes in one day. This young man, as a result of the investigations, quit the habit and in the following period of six weeks his marks came up 10 per cent on the average.

The boys who are doing the best work in school do not take to smoking. The average grade of the ten highest boys is 90.9 per cent. None of these use tobacco. The average grade of the ten smokers who stand highest is 78.9 per cent. Probably the really able and ambitious boy knows better than to dissipate his energies in this way. The habit seems to fasten itself on the less capable and those of average ability.

When a boy's natural capacity is such as to admit of his making a grade not much above the passing mark, smoking proves fatal to his educational progress. Such a boy fails in his work as soon as he takes to smoking, and presently drops out of school. The habitual smoker was seldom found to be capable in the sports and games of the school. Thus there is nothing in athletics to hold him in school; and when he finds himself a failure in class work as well, he abandons the attempt to get an education.

The most striking figures which the investigation disclosed are here summarized:

Number	Average grade
77 boys who have never smoked.....	84.5
24 boys who have quit smoking.....	80.5
55 habitual smokers now in school.....	76
45 habitual smokers who have recently quit school.....	69

About half of all the boys in the high school learn to smoke. Of these a third learn before entering. The others learned in over 90 per cent of cases

during the summer vacation. Many of them took up the habit to kill time while engaged either as caddies at the golf clubs during the waits between service, or as ushers at Ravinia Park during the intervals between concerts. Probably one-third of the boys who fail in school owe their lack of success directly to this vice. Most of the boys smoke cigarettes. Those who have had the habit a long time smoke pipes. The boys are not made sick by the tobacco; but all acknowledge that it is harmful.

In seeking reasons why high-school boys so frequently fail in their work and why they drop out of school in such large numbers, school men have probably not given sufficient consideration to the extent and evil of the use of tobacco among students. During the period of growth when there is often a general break-up of the nervous and physical organization of adolescents, and when the heart is so often irregular in its action, the use of tobacco is particularly injurious. Its baneful effects are immediately apparent in loss of mental, moral, and physical tone. By it the boy is unfitted to succeed either at work or at play. He becomes discouraged and drops out of school.

RICHARD L. SANDWICK

HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS

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#### OVIEDO AND UNIVERSITY EXTENSION<sup>1</sup>

The little University of Oviedo, although established by Phillip III as far back as the year 1604, has not grown rapidly in three hundred years. It has not more than three hundred students in regular attendance, and its faculty of twenty or thirty teachers do all their work in one modest structure less than two hundred feet square. The institution has an annual income of less than \$13,000, and is by no means the most prosperous of the generally somewhat neglected chain of Spanish universities. But this struggling little school has for years kept in operation an original and very successful system of university extension. If the enterprise had been carried on in any other part of the world than Spain it would have enjoyed a generous amount of advertising; as it is, the news of it which the Oviedo professor, Dr. Altamira, brought to this country in the course of his visit in 1910 was news indeed.

It is not easy to give statistical information about this movement or to study its method of operation; in fact, it seems delightfully free from method. This comment is not intended for sarcasm; opportunism sometimes has its decided advantages. Started in 1898, the movement has never involved any attempt to work toward diplomas or degrees, or to keep any sort of record of the progress of the students. The enterprise has never received a peseta of help from either the institution or the state. And most unique feature of all, the subjects of the courses are chosen, not by the teachers, but by the students.

<sup>1</sup> *La Extension Universitaria.* Par RAFAEL ALTAMIRA. Universidad de la Habana: Revista de la Facultad de Letras y Ciencias, Mayo de 1912.